CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE EIGHT HUNDRED AND THIRTY-FIRST PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 5 August 1999, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Mr. Guillermo Enrique González (Argentina)

GE.99-65378 (E)

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I declare open the 831st plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

I have no delegation on my list of speakers for today. Are there any delegations wishing to take the floor? I give the floor to the representative of India, Ambassador Kunadi.

Ms. KUNADI (India): Mr. President, allow me to express the appreciation of my delegation in seeing you conduct our proceedings with such skill at an important juncture in the work of the Conference.

The Indian delegation had an opportunity at the plenary on 24 June to put forward its views on the current impasse in the work of the Conference. We expressed our disappointment at the current situation, which, it appears, has left the Conference in quite the same position as it was at the conclusion of the second part. In echoing the widespread sentiment among the members of this Conference to commence substantive work on the basis of a comprehensive programme of work, my delegation reiterates its readiness to extend to you all possible support in your efforts.

My delegation has sought the floor today to convey its position on the expansion of the membership of this Conference. This has been an issue that has engaged our attention for several years. It was in 1996 that the CD last took a definitive decision on the expansion of its membership, limited to 23 new members.

It may be recalled that the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly stated that it was deeply aware of the continuing requirement for a single disarmament negotiating forum of limited size taking decisions on the basis of consensus. The Final Document also recognized the need for membership to be reviewed at regular intervals.

India has consistently held the view that there needs to be a balance between the criteria of membership of this Conference and its effectiveness as a negotiating forum. The significance of striking the appropriate balance has never been underscored more than during the years following the end of the cold war.

India supported the appointment of a Special Coordinator on expansion as part of the programme of work of the Conference. Therefore, when the proposal by the President on the expansion of membership of the Conference, as contained in CD/1567, was put forward in February this year, we stated that this issue required further reflection. We were hopeful that the commencement of work of the CD, through a comprehensive programme of work including consultations through a Special Coordinator on expansion, would facilitate comprehensive consideration of the issues involved and pave the way for an early decision on the admission of new members. Regrettably, and for reasons well known to all, the Conference has been unable to move forward on its programme of work, thereby also delaying the consideration of its expansion.

(Ms. Kunadi, India)

The Conference - given the important task at hand of negotiating disarmament instruments of abiding and universal acceptance and applicability - cannot afford the luxury of being deflected from its chosen path. Consistent with this perspective, India does not hold a country-specific position on expansion. Before we stand in judgement on the merits of individual applications, many of them dating back at least two decades, or link the issue of expansion to any transitory events, we all have to be aware that the credibility of this Conference, like that of its individual members, can withstand the test of time only when based on enduring commitments to the principles of genuine and effective disarmament and equal and legitimate security for all.

Striking an appropriate balance between its representativeness and its effectiveness will be a continuing requirement of this Conference. Therefore, we underline that the CD should remain engaged in devoting attention to issues relating to criteria and its effectiveness as a negotiating forum.

Mr. President, in accordance with instructions just received from my capital, I have the pleasure to inform you that India would support the admission of Ecuador, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Malaysia and Tunisia as members of this Conference. These are countries with which India enjoys warm and friendly relations and we look forward to an early opportunity to welcome them in our midst.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank the representative of India for her very important statement. The Conference on Disarmament, and the Chair in particular, is most especially grateful for the efforts I am aware you have made to reach this conclusion. I trust, then, that I will be able to continue in formal consultations to see whether we can break the deadlock at least on this item in the next few days. All this without prejudice to exerting maximum efforts towards what should be the common goal of this Conference on Disarmament, that is, to achieve a comprehensive and balanced programme of work for the future of this year and possibly also the coming year. But, once again, my personal gratitude for the efforts made by you and other delegations which have urged your respective Governments to take a broad view of this important issue of expansion. We shall continue carrying out the necessary consultation procedures to put into effect as soon as possible the draft decision prepared on the basis of Ambassador Hofer's report.

Are there any other delegations wishing to address a particular issue? The distinguished Ambassador of Pakistan has the floor.

Mr. AKRAM (Pakistan): Mr. President, since this is the first opportunity I have had to take the floor during your presidency of the Conference, may I convey to you my warmest felicitations and expression of the full support of my delegation with regard to the conduct of the work of the Conference and wish you all the best in overcoming the obstacles which we have encountered in formalizing the work programme of the Conference this year?

(Mr. Akram, Pakistan)

May I also take this opportunity to express my deep appreciation to your predecessor, Ambassador Dembri of Algeria, who made very important strides towards achieving agreement on a work programme? The fact that we were not able to conclude the work that he initiated reflects in no way on the strenous efforts which Ambassador Dembri made and which no doubt will contribute to the successes of this Conference either under your presidency or under a subsequent one.

I have requested the floor to speak on the issue which has just been addressed by my distinguished colleague from India, that is, the question of the expansion of the membership of the Conference on Disarmament. As you know, my delegation, like other members of the Group of 21, has in the past years expressed itself quite clearly with regard to the question of the size, the composition and the balance between the various members of this Conference. I will not dwell on that issue at this moment, but also express the hope, as has my colleague from India, that thought will continue to be given to the issue of the balance and composition of the CD, with a view to enhancing its effectiveness in the future. We trust that the forthcoming General Assembly may also be an opportunity for us to commence a process of self-examination that is required upon this and other issues relating to the CD.

Mr. President, as I have already conveyed to you informally, my delegation also received instructions last week to support the proposal which was made some time ago by Ambassador Hofer of Switzerland and which is contained in document CD/1567, which would decide to admit Ecuador, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Malaysia and Tunisia as members of the Conference on Disarmament. Following intensive consultations, the Government of Pakistan was able to decide to support the immediate admission of these five States as members of the Conference, and my delegation would be in a position to take a decision on this today, if it is the desire of the Conference on Disarmament, which brings me to the question I wish to pose to you and through you to my distinguished colleague from India - whether the statement which has been made by India would require that the decision on expansion to these five members should be conjoined with some decision with regard to the future consideration of criteria or size or whether this decision can go forward while we take a separate decision with regard to the question of criteria and effectiveness of the Conference to which the distinguished Ambassador of India has referred.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): Many thanks to the Ambassador of Pakistan. It was not my position to mention any delegation in particular, but I must also thank you most especially for the efforts you also made to facilitate the work of the President on this expansion issue. So my profound personal and institutional gratitude is conveyed to you as well. I call on Ambassador Kunadi of India.

Ms. KUNADI (India): A question has been raised by the Ambassador of Pakistan regarding the modalities and the manner in which we could take this decision. What I have done was to state India's position on the question of expansion, but as far as my delegation is concerned, we would be in a position to take a decision on the basis of CD/1567, if that is agreed by the

(Ms. Kunadi, India)

Conference. The points which I raised in my statement are naturally important issues, and we hope that the CD would give attention to these issues at an appropriate time.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): Thank you very much for your subsequent clarification. I think basically we have two options. One would be to suspend this formal meeting for five minutes, to move to an informal meeting to enable the Chair to carry out immediate direct consultations and to meet again in plenary in order to take decisions. The other option is to take our time, to carry out consultations during the week and then finally take a decision at the plenary on Thursday next week. Pakistan has the floor.

Mr. AKRAM (Pakistan): Mr. President, I think that some of the five countries have been waiting a long time for admission to the Conference and I think that some of us may not be here in subsequent weeks, for reasons which I do not need to explain, and therefore I would suggest that we suspend the meeting for a few minutes, that you formulate a proposal that you could put to us in an informal session and that we formalize this matter if possible today.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank the Ambassador of Pakistan. If there are no difficulties or any type of objection, we would therefore suspend the plenary meeting for about five minutes. I would then carry out some bilateral consultations and immediately proceed with an informal meeting to take a decision and meet again in a formal meeting. If there are no objections, the meeting is suspended for 15 minutes.

The meeting was suspended at 10.35 a.m. and resumed at 11.25 a.m.

The PRESIDENT: We resume the formal plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

As you know, a proposal was made to the effect that the Conference take a decision on the expansion of its membership. This proposal is contained in document CD/1567, put forward by the then President of the Conference, Ambassador Grey of the United States of America, on the basis of the recommendation of the former Special Coordinator on expansion, Ambassador Hofer of Switzerland. The secretariat has distributed copies of this document to all of you.

The draft proposal contained in CD/1567 will need to be revised to reflect the fact that the decision will take effect as of today, 5 August 1999.

May I take it that the Conference is in a position to adopt this draft decision as orally revised?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: I am very happy to do so.

The secretariat will issue the decision we have just taken as an official document of the Conference.

I should like to express my deep appreciation to all delegations for making this decision possible.

Some delegations will be referring to this issue now. Other delegations prefer to speak on this matter next Thursday, 12 August. There is no inconvenience. They are all very welcome to take the floor either today or next Thursday.

I should also like to warmly welcome, on behalf of all of us, the newly admitted members, Ecuador, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Malaysia and Tunisia, and look forward to their contribution to our work. Finally, I should like to express our deep gratitude to Ambassador Hofer of Switzerland, whose untiring efforts and commitment made this decision possible.

The secretariat will make the necessary arrangements to accommodate the newly admitted members in this Chamber.

I offer the floor to the delegations that would like to speak now. India has the floor.

Ms. KUNADI (India): I have requested the floor on behalf of the Group of 21 to welcome Ecuador, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Malaysia and Tunisia as members of the Conference on Disarmament. This is an important occasion for the Conference as it welcomes in its midst these five new members. We are confident that the current expansion of the Conference will enhance its vitality and stature. The Group takes particular pleasure in welcoming those countries which have been associated with the Group's work as observers.

The Group of 21 welcomes the admission of the five States and we extend our assurances to work together with them to further strengthen and enhance the work of this Conference.

Mr. SEIBERT (Germany): I have requested the floor on behalf of the delegations of the Western Group. The delegations of the Western Group warmly welcome the five new members to the CD. It is a decision we have supported and awaited for a long time. Delegations of the Western Group are looking forward to working constructively with Ecuador, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Malaysia and Tunisia in an effort to move the Conference forward to substantive work.

I should also like to thank and congratulate both you, Mr. President, and Ambassador Hofer for your skilful and untiring effort to secure consensus on today's decision on the enlargement of the CD, and I should also like to express our gratitude to all your predecessors who have been working persistently on this matter.

Mr. MIKHNEVICH (Belarus) (translated from Russian): On behalf of the Eastern European Group I would like to congratulate the delegations of Ireland, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Tunisia and Ecuador on their accession as members of the Conference on Disarmament. I would like to thank Ambassador Hofer of Switzerland, you, Mr. President, and your predecessors in the Chair, for the great contribution which you have made in resolving the question of expansion of the membership of the CD. We hope that today's event will serve as a positive impetus in our work as a whole and will enable us to shift other problems in the Conference forward out of deadlock. To the new fully-fledged members of the CD, I would like to wish active and creative work in a common cause of humanity - the cause of disarmament.

Mr. LI (China) (translated from Chinese): Mr. President, the Chinese delegation would like first of all to congratulate you wholeheartedly on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. We appreciate your sincere efforts during the past few weeks in pushing the work of the CD forward. The Chinese delegation will fully support your work and coordinate with you in your work. At the same time, the Chinese delegation would like to thank your predecessor, Ambassador Dembri of Algeria, for his excellent work.

On the expansion of the membership, China holds a consistent position. The work of the CD has a bearing on international peace and security and is valued and taken seriously by all countries of the world. The CD should be more representative. Many countries over the years wish to become full members of the CD. In view of that fact, China supports the proper expansion of the CD on the basis of consensus.

The Chinese delegation is pleased to note that today all parties have reached a consensus on the proposal made by the former Special Coordinator on expansion of the membership, Ambassador Hofer of Switzerland. That proposal has been reflected in the formal proposal put forward by you today (CD/1567): the Conference on Disarmament admits Ecuador, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Malaysia and Tunisia as its members as of today. The Chinese delegation supports the draft decision put forward by the President.

China has always maintained friendly relationships with these five countries and enjoyed good cooperation in international affairs with them. The five countries have always attached great importance to multilateral disarmament issues and made their respective contributions. The Chinese delegation deeply believes that they will make greater contributions to the work of the CD.

Mr. GREY (United States of America): Mr. President, since this is the first time I am speaking under your presidency, I want to congratulate you on your assumption of the job and assure you of my delegation's full support.

I have a statement that is dated 8 September 1998. I am going to use it today. Talk about optimism! The United States welcomes the five new members of the Conference on Disarmament - Ecuador, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Malaysia and Tunisia. We look forward to working with them as full and constructive

(Mr. Grey, United States)

participants in the work of the CD. I have the additional pleasure of being able now to report back to the south shore of Massachusetts that the CD has done the right thing.

Nevertheless, my authorities remain concerned about the effective functioning of the Conference with five new members when the CD's effectiveness at 61 members has not yet been fully demonstrated. For this reason, I have been instructed to state for the record that the United States will not consider a further expansion until the CD has demonstrated its capacity to negotiate effectively with a larger membership, through for example - and I probably repeat myself - the successful completion of a fissile material cut-off treaty. As I have stated many times, the United States is prepared to listen to the concerns of all CD members and to be flexible whenever possible. In this spirit, we believe that a modest expansion appeared to be reasonable and justified in this instance and at this time and we congratulate Ambassador Hofer for bringing this to fruition.

We look forward to the cooperative efforts of the new members in responding effectively to the demands of the CD business, especially regarding work on an FMCT.

Mr. TAWFIK (Egypt) (translated from Arabic): The Egyptian delegation would like to endorse what was said by Her Excellency the Ambassador of India on behalf of the Group of 21 and we would like to welcome the decision we have just taken now to admit Ecuador, Ireland, Tunisia, Kazakhstan and Malaysia as members of the Conference on Disarmament. All these are friendly countries who have been widely active and efficient and we are confident that the five countries will positively contribute to the success of the work of the Conference. At a time when we celebrate this step along with the five countries - a step which we have awaited for several months - we would like to remind you of what we said before, namely that the question of the expansion of membership of the Conference requires comprehensive study and effective steps to ensure maximum efficiency in the Conference's performance of its tasks and a more equal representation of the key regions of the world. On the other hand, we hope that the positive climate created by this decision would help us overcome the obstacles facing the Conference in arriving at an integrated programme of work.

In conclusion, I would like to express my deep gratitude to you, Mr. President, for the constructive efforts you have exerted to enable us to reach this decision. I would also like to express my appreciation to Ambassador Hofer of Switzerland for the constant efforts he exerted as the Special Coordinator on expansion of membership in the year 1998.

Ms. ANDERSON (Ireland): I would like to express the warmest appreciation to all members of the Conference on Disarmament for the decision adopted this morning to admit Ireland and four other applicants to full membership. Everyone will understand, I think, a real sense of celebration on our part that our 17-year wait for membership has finally come to an end. This is a landmark day as far as Ireland is concerned.

(Ms. Anderson, Ireland)

Our sense of celebration is tempered in a couple of respects but I will come to these in a moment.

First and foremost, it is my most pleasurable task to convey thanks. There are so many of you to whom we owe gratitude that it becomes difficult to single people out. But I begin, of course, with Ambassador Hofer. Without his skilled and dedicated input as Special Coordinator last year, today's decision simply would not have come to pass. And then there has been the commitment of successive CD Presidents, so many of whom have made unstinting efforts. Your immediate predecessor, Ambassador Dembri, showed enormous commitment. And a particular mention of Ambassador Grey, under whose presidency the draft decision adopted today was tabled. And of course our warmest and most special thanks to you, Mr. President, for the key role that you personally have played in finally bringing all the pieces together. We thank you.

Apart from office holders, there are very many friends and colleagues in the room who have played a part. Those who have been our stalwart supporters over a prolonged period, and who helped us overcome so many setbacks, have our heartfelt gratitude. But also those who had to overcome doubts and difficulties in order to participate in today's consensus, to you I want to convey our sincere appreciation for the efforts you have made.

I mentioned that our sense of celebration is tempered in a couple of respects. Firstly, we would greatly have preferred to enter the CD as part of a wider expansion than we see today. Given our own history, it would be strange indeed if Ireland did not empathize with those applicants who have so far not been admitted. We entirely understand their frustration, particularly those whose applications are of long standing.

Speaking here in June 1996, following the admission of 23 new members, I welcomed that decision to open up the CD, to modernize it and bring it into the post-cold-war world. I predicted that the inclusionary instinct demonstrated at that time would continue to propel the process forward. I make the same prediction today. Outside or inside the CD, Ireland's convictions on the desirability of expansion remain unchanged. The CD is an international institution negotiating crucial instruments which aspire to universal application. We believe, as we have always done, that its membership must reflect that vocation.

Secondly, we would also have much preferred to join at a time when this body was demonstrating a greater sense of direction and common purpose. With the CD work stalled for so long, we have been asked - and indeed on occasion have asked ourselves - why we still wanted to join. Our determination to be admitted represents an act of faith in the future of this body. We believe that a sense of responsibility will reassert itself; that it is simply inconceivable that the CD should continue to squander its credibility. The obstacles in the way of progress are small in number and readily surmountable if there is the necessary political will. And let us hope, as others have said this morning, that today's decision will provide an impetus for further

(Ms. Anderson, Ireland)

progress. For our part, we will join other members in doing everything possible to assist the efforts of the President in building consensus around a work programme acceptable to all.

I personally have never been comfortable with the description of the CD as a club. The connotations are rather too cosy and too elitist. But however we describe this body, we have never been in doubt that membership is important and worth while. We consider our admission today a great privilege, a great opportunity and a great responsibility. Again, my thanks to all of you and to you especially, Mr. President.

Mr. HAMIDON (Malaysia): Good news comes rather unexpectedly, and this is the case today for Malaysia, so I have not come with a prepared text, unlike my colleague Anne Anderson of Ireland. We will have a full statement read next Thursday, with your permission, Mr. President, but I would not like to miss this occasion to express our deepest appreciation and gratitude to all of you members of the CD for the decision today that placed Malaysia among the five countries to be admitted to this Conference. This is something that we have been waiting for for some time and we therefore look forward to working with you in your endeavours. I would of course like also to register our appreciation and thanks to Ambassador Erwin Hofer of Switzerland for his tireless efforts in this regard and also to you, Mr. President, for making this a reality today.

Mr. VALENCIA (Ecuador) (translated from Spanish): Ecuador will make a formal statement on its admission to the Conference on Disarmament at the first meeting in which it participates as a full member of this forum. However, like the representatives who have spoken before me, I wish on behalf of the delegation of Ecuador to express my country's gratitude to you, Mr. President, and the members of the Conference on Disarmament who have agreed today to the entry of five new countries, among them Ecuador, to this important forum. Our gratitude is also addressed to Ambassador Hofer for his efforts to facilitate the building of a consensus on this subject. The decision adopted reflects the resolve of the Conference on Disarmament to consolidate a membership which is broad and representative of international realities. Breadth and representativeness are two factors without which it is difficult to conceive of genuine effectiveness in international relations. The Conference on Disarmament should continue further along this path.

On this occasion, it is appropriate to reiterate Ecuador's commitment to the important ideals of the United Nations and, in particular, those of the Conference on Disarmament. Under this guide to action, Ecuador will have the signal honour and serious responsibility of contributing in the Conference to the construction of a world which is increasingly free of the risks and shortages of war. Without omitting to mention the participation of the head of my delegation, Ambassador Luis Gallegos, in representing Ecuador's interest in offering its contribution in the CD, I reiterate the gratitude of the Ecuadorian Government to the distinguished members of this Conference for the decision taken and affirm to them the readiness of my country to count on the constant support and cooperation of Ecuador to promote the aims of the Conference on Disarmament.

Mr. AKRAM (Pakistan): Mr. President, the distinguished Ambassador of India has expressed the position and warm welcome of the Group of 21 to the five members who have been admitted today to membership of the Conference on Disarmament. I would merely like to add a few words on behalf of my delegation.

Firstly, I think that we owe you a debt of gratitude for the active manner in which you have pursued a decision on this matter, and you have been crowned with success. We also thank Ambassador Hofer for the painstaking consultations he conducted which led to the proposal that was tabled by our former President, Ambassador Grey, in CD/1567. I do recall that last September in a statement in the Conference I said that we had come within a hair's breadth of taking a decision last September on extension, and that might perhaps explain the date of the statement which was read by Ambassador Grey this morning. Events have intervened and delayed this welcome decision which we have taken today. This decision was made possible by constructive diplomacy and the efforts of several actors within and outside this Conference. My delegation and my country warmly welcome the five new members of the Conference on Disarmament - Ecuador, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Malaysia and Tunisia - with all of whom Pakistan enjoys excellent relations.

We believe that the admission of these five members and the decision we have taken today will contribute to the creation of a more constructive environment within this Conference, and we trust that this decision will enable us to take even more important decisions with regard to the work of this Conference.

Finally, as to further expansion, my delegation would of course be prepared to consider this with relation to the criteria of balance and effectiveness. We will, for our part, not link further expansion to the conclusion of a treaty on nuclear disarmament.

Mr. JOMAA (Tunisia) (translated from Spanish): If I may, Mr. President, I will begin in Spanish in your honour and that of your presidency in order to thank you for having given me the floor and for your intensive last-minute efforts to arrive at a happy conclusion to the question of the expansion of the Conference. My delegation will have an opportunity to revert to this issue in a more formal statement next Thursday, but I did not wish to let this opportunity pass without thanking you, as well as the members of the Conference, for the confidence they placed in my country, Tunisia, in accepting it as a member of this Conference.

(continued in French)

Our profound gratitude and thanks go in particular to Ambassador Hofer of Switzerland for his commitment and the continuous efforts he never ceased making to arrive at a happy outcome on this matter. I would not wish to conclude without assuring you of the honour conferred on us in becoming a member of the Conference on Disarmament and the commitment of our country for the causes of peace and a better world, and our willingness to work in close cooperation with the other members of the Conference to foster progress in the Conference's discussions.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): Many thanks to the representative of Tunisia.

The list of speakers is closed. I think we have had a productive morning, bearing in mind that when we arrived at 10 a.m., we did not even have a list of speakers. Let us hope that this is an act of faith and confidence in the future of the work of the Conference on Disarmament.

Allow me to make a few final comments on the fundamental issue. Sincerely I am personally grateful to you all for having enabled the expansion to occur on this occasion but, as President, I do not at any time lose sight of the fact that the Conference's aim is to achieve a programme of work. As you know, I have continued throughout the week to engage in a number of consultations so as to try and make as much progress as possible. I must say, with the frankness which is typical of me, and which I believe some of you are already aware of, that I have moments of greater optimism than other moments - sometimes in the same day: in the morning you begin with greater optimism and towards the end of the afternoon the facts have not enabled you to create the situation of optimism you looked forward to in the morning. But all is not lost. We sincerely expect that we can continue making progress in the work that will enable us to reach agreement on a balanced and agreed programme of work, either under the current President or immediately during my successor's term. But I trust that I will be able to continue to make the greatest efforts. I must say that I have found among all the regional groups the same conviction of the need to reach agreement. Obviously, there are restrictions, there are limitations, there are difficulties to overcome, but I am inclined to believe that it is worth while continuing the effort involving bilateral and multilateral consultations to see whether we can finally reach agreement on the main goal of this Conference.

We thus conclude our work for today. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 12 August 1999, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.